



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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**DLNR IMPLEMENTS INCREASED PROTECTION FOR AHIHI-KINA‘U NATURAL
AREA RESERVE
-- AREA RESTRICTIONS PUT IN PLACE FOR TWO YEARS**

KAHULUI -- Starting on Friday, August 1, 2008, the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) will implement a new two-year area restriction for the ‘Ahihi-Kina‘u Natural Area Reserve that will close off access to the majority of the reserve, including unofficial trails to Kalua o Lapa, Kalaeloa (popularly known as “the Aquarium”), and Mokuha (also known as “the Fishbowl”).

Access to northern portions of the reserve most used by the public will remain open during visiting hours. Some of these open areas are Waiala Cove and the coastal area along ‘Ahihi Bay including the “Dumps” surf break.

The Board of Land and Natural Resources at its meeting on May 23, 2008 authorized restricted access to portions of the reserve for two years to increase protection for the resources at ‘Ahihi-Kina‘u Natural Area Reserve. The restricted access period will last until July 31, 2010.

Like all of the state’s officially designated natural area reserves, ‘Ahihi-Kina‘u was set aside as a preserve to protect the area’s unique natural resources from harm or disturbance. This preserve is the only one with both land and ocean and coastal areas included, in Hawai‘i.

“Recent studies have shown that the growing numbers of visitors to the area have severely impacted both the natural and cultural resources, and we cannot allow resource degradation to continue unchecked,” said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

“This two-year restriction period is a first step to immediately address concerns and allow the fragile resources in ‘Ahihi-Kina‘u to rest. We ask that all members of the public respect and keep out of the restricted areas,” said Thielen.

Persons found in the restricted areas or in the reserve after visiting hours may be cited or arrested. Those found guilty of these violations shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined up to \$1,000 and/or imprisoned for up to a year.

By law, it is illegal to remove, injure, or kill any living thing as well as to damage, disturb, or remove any geologic or cultural site.

During the two-year period, regulatory and educational signage will be installed to help raise awareness of the boundary of the closed area, the fragile nature of resources, and proper etiquette in a sensitive area so that the public may enjoy the resources without impacting them.

DLNR staff will be monitoring sensitive areas, and assessing whether further measures and protective actions might be taken to and yet still allow for public access in the future.

Public meetings will be held to discuss the future plans for the reserve through the development of an action plan and a long range management plan. At the end of the two-year period, staff will present their findings to the Board of Land and Natural Resources, who will determine if further restrictions are warranted or if the reserve will be reopened.

Access into the newly-restricted areas may be granted via permit to individuals, which may include cultural practitioners, and school groups. All access into restricted areas will require an approved permit from the Natural Area Reserve Commission and accompaniment by a ranger at all times.

For a map of the restricted areas or more information on ‘Ahihi-Kina‘u Natural Area Reserve, please visit <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/dofaw/nars> or call the Division of Forestry and Wildlife office on Maui at 984-8100.

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